1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)1932
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of the cows. If she went back home you would claim the cows back from her father, who is your own "father," and this would interfere with the sacrifices to your father and father's father.' 582 586

Marriage Customs: These appear to be almost identical with those of the Nankanse, as will be seen from the following: The suitor approaches the father of the girl, who refers him to his eldest brother, or father, if alive. The suitor brings tobacco to the girl's father and mother; they show these gifts to the head of the compound. Three or four days later the suitor will bring a dead guinea-fowl and give it to his future mother-in-law. This gift is called *pɔ-bore-bono* (something with which to seek a wife). Later, the suitor will send a live fowl and guinea-fowl and corn by a messenger known as *ahen* (*isiga* in Nankane). These offerings will be given to the girl's *seyr* (guardian spirit) by the head of her house, who will say: 'Receive these things; the girl has reached puberty; she is ready to go to her husband; the day they bore her, they gave her to you.' The girl now goes to the bridegroom's town, to the compound of the *ahen* (who is a son of a woman who came from the bride's town). There she remains three days, after which she goes to her husband. Sometimes the cows have to be paid before the girl leaves her father's compound; they are then known as *lay bo* (*leka* in Nankane). Sometimes they are paid long after marriage and are then called *sull' bono*. After the bride has gone to her husband's compound, her brothers will go there, and her husband will kill a dog for them, and a fowl and some goats. After they have returned home, the bridegroom will send the *ahen* with a live cock to the section-head who is 'half-brother' to the head of the section to which the bride belongs, and also a dead guinea-fowl to the bride's mother. These gifts are called *sandan* (compare Nankane *sandono*). Without this formality the marriage is not legal, however many cows are paid, nor may the husband claim adultery damages. This gift is to obtain a witness. If the woman later leaves her husband, the same *ahen* will claim back the cows. 584 585 171 [776] [782]

Funeral Customs: The following account of a Talense funeral was given me by the *Ten'dan'* of Tongo: 764 793

'When a man dies I have to make the grave.' (This is not to be taken literally; he will be represented by a brother or son.) 'I go to the spot with ashes in a red pot and mark out the grave in a circle. I then dig a little and hand the axe (*leho*) to the *bayas* (sextons) and they continue to dig the grave (*yeog'*). I then begin to sacrifice. The *kunran* (the person in charge of the funeral custom) gives me a fowl (not a

1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)1932
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XXXVII

THE TALENSE (*continued*)

Tɔŋ-nab

THE ceremony I am about to describe was one which I witnessed on Sunday 6 May 1928. It was, perhaps, the most interesting and extraordinary of many curious rites which it has been my privilege to attend in the course of many years of anthropological field-work. Perhaps I regard it thus because particular associations have made it so for me, but I use the word 'extraordinary' advisedly, on account of the almost grotesque blending of the ultra-new with the things which are very old. Flying machines, motor-cars, and the cultivation of cocoa—these seem out of place with pagan gods and naked humanity, but in this ceremony all were mingled, and staged in a setting which must have been familiar to troglodyte man. *Tɔŋ-nab*[1] means literally the Chief of Tɔŋ. Its shrine is perhaps the best known in the country about which I write, and its fame and name have passed beyond the boundaries of the Northern Territories and reached as far down as to the sea-board towns of the Gold Coast.

Its power is from God (*Na Ŋin*); its priest is the local *Ten'dan'*; its taboos, which must be observed by all its devotees, include the following avoidances:

(*a*) Clothes, when attending ceremonies in connexion with its cult.
(*b*) *Zia-kom* (corn and water mixed).
(*c*) Beer made from *zia*-corn.
(*d*) *Meya* (water turtle).
(*e*) *Sakur* (tortoise).
(*f*) *Bandog* (crocodile).
(*g*) *Wafo* (python).

An oath may be taken on this god, which runs: *M'po Tɔŋ nab la a zia koom* (I swear by *Tɔŋ nab* and its corn-water).

The home of this deity is in the Tong Hills, that beautiful low range which rises from the compound-scattered millet flats below. There seem to be two rendezvous at which the hundreds of pilgrims, who come from all quarters in the dry seasons to make their vows before this shrine, foregather. After climbing from the plains one enters a rugged

[1] It is also known as *Ta ni* and *Ta pwiga*.

1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)1932
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788 defile, which winds up the hill-side and then suddenly emerges on a
776 grassy table-land, the home of countless flocks of wild guinea-fowl.
778 There are no villages or compounds on the summit, for, after the punitive expedition many years ago, the people were ordered to come down from the hill-tops and live in the valley.

776 The god itself, which is supposed to be an emanation of the Supreme
778 Being, does not, as far as I could discover, possess any shrine beyond a natural temple in the form of a large rock cavern, where the service about to be described was held, and a rock altar, that may or may not have been natural, in front of a second cavity in the rock not very far from the first cave, the entrance to which was hung with filthy old rags. The altar was so smothered in fowls' feathers, which also lay more than ankle deep on the ground, that I could not be certain of its composition.

796 On the morning of the ceremony I reached the rocks below the
788 first cave about 8 a.m. and found I was the first arrival. The Chief of Teŋ'zugu and the *Ten'dan'* had not yet appeared. From then onwards, [484] until about 9 a.m., groups of pilgrims began to arrive. To my wonder and astonishment I saw well-dressed Africans, men and women who I later discovered, had motored hundreds of miles from Kumasi, Kwahu, and Mampon. Among these were several of my Ashanti friends of old days, and never shall I forget the look of amazement on their faces at meeting me again in such a place. About 9 a.m. the Chief of Teŋ'zugu and the *Ten'dan'* arrived. The former was a really magnificent-looking man, standing well over six feet and very finely [777] proportioned. He was covered in amulets and fetishes, as was the *Ten'dan'* (see Figs. 73 and 74).

796 I told them (as we had indeed already arranged) that I would like to attend the ceremony and register my wish and make my vows. They asked permission to go forward and make preparation, and soon afterwards I heard the rhythmic clapping of hands, which was faintly audible to us below. All the pilgrims now began to undress. The Coast women disrobed and put on shorts; hats, shoes, white pith helmets, and clothes were piled up and scattered over the boulders (see Fig. 75). We were now called to come forward, and climbed up the rocks until we came to the low entrance of the cave (see Fig. 76). This we were asked to enter backwards. Soon the cave was packed so full that many were sitting on their companions' legs and laps. I know I had a person on each knee. Some one asked me to give my name and what I wanted. I asked Aboya, who was with me, to state the nature of my work; how I was trying to record their ancient customs, that the best of them

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
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tribes with different taboos, they must observe these in addition to the taboos of their own clan. One segment of Samiit, which also belongs to this congregation, is prohibited in addition from eating the snake, so a supplicant coming to the *Bɔɣar* sponsored by Samiit must refrain also from eating the snake. Wannii, another well-known External *Bɔɣar* in the Hills, includes in its congregation only clans and lineages which taboo the snake and crocodile as well as the tortoise and water-tortoise. Hence, children of strangers who are the spiritual wards of this *Bɔɣar* must avoid all four animals. Clans and lineages that have atypical totems also have independent External *Bɔɣa*.

Among the Hill Talis, then (and this applies also to the people of Zubiuŋ and Gbeog), common totems generally indicate membership of the same External *Bɔɣar* congregation. This means that the clans and lineages concerned are subject to common ritual sanctions in terms of the ancestor cult, embodied in common cult objects and ceremonies. It implies obligatory bonds of amity and interdependence on the politico-ritual plane, prohibiting recourse to arms, for example, as a means of redressing wrongs between member lineages of the same congregation, or acts of hostility such as the abduction of a fellow member's wife, though he may not be a kinsman. It implies formal duties of member lineage to member lineage in funeral ceremonies; and it creates a feeling of belonging together, of spontaneous goodwill towards one another, among the member lineages, which even the bitter political dissensions of to-day have not altogether destroyed. Belonging to the same religious community in itself connotes social ties analogous to those of clanship.

The *Bɔɣar* cult resembles other forms of ritual observance tied to the notion of descent in that there is an oath associated with it. It emphasizes the key idea of the cult, the dominance of the collective ancestors, as we shall see shortly. For that matter, this idea is the main theme of all the rites and doctrines of the cult—the initiation of youths by 'handing them over to their ancestors' as the Talis put it; the Harvest and Sowing Festivals; and no less in such minor things as entrusting a recalcitrant wife, the source of future descendants, to the *Bɔɣar* or the coercion of an adulterous wife by means of it.

But before we deal with these points, an aspect of the *Bɔɣar* cult to which we have previously referred must be further discussed. An External *Bɔɣar* can become the spirit-guardian (*sɛyɔr*) of an individual. An ancestor spirit who becomes a person's spirit-guardian is defined in native religious doctrine as 'He who has my life in his keeping so that I exist (*ɔn m-mar n-ɣovor ka mbɛ*)', and the ward (*sɛyɔraan*) must keep the totemic avoidances of the *Bɔɣar* community. This applies particularly to non-Talis (Mamprusi, Dagomba, Bulisi, and others) who come as pilgrims to the *Bɔɣar* to supplicate for children. The special bonds of ritual dependence thus created include both the parents and the children born, as the natives believe, in answer to their prayers. The Hill Talis themselves keep the avoidances whether or not they are personally the wards of the *Bɔɣar*; for, as they put it, they are all *ipso facto* under its spiritual guardianship.

If a stranger pilgrim has a child in answer to his prayers, his first duty

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776 is to pay over the gifts and sacrifices he has promised the *Bɔyar* in return.
788 Later, when the child is old enough to travel, it is brought to the *Bɔyar* to be ritually dedicated to it and named, and thus brought into communion with it. Wards of the *Bɔyar* have prescribed names according to [551] their order of birth. First-borns are always Tɔŋ or Bɔyare; later children have names compounded of these two names and suffixes indicative of sex or birth order—Tɔndoog or Tɔnpɔk or Tanzoo, and so forth. A girl [582] ward must remain chaste until she marries; and when she is given in marriage she has to be released from this bond by means of gifts and sacrifices to the *Bɔyar* before she goes to her husband.

769 The ritual dominion of the Hill Talis' External *Bɔya* extends, also, to whole clans and lineages of non-Tale tribes as we shall see later. Here
648 it is enough to mention that every External *Bɔyar* of the Hill Talis has a
574 traditional network of client lineages and clans among the adjacent non-Tale tribes, the Mamprusi, Dagomba, Bulisi, Woolisi, and even Mossi; and nowadays also in Ashanti and the Colony. Every year, at the time of the Harvest Festivals, these client lineages send messengers with gifts and sacrifices to the *Bɔyar* to which they adhere, to give thanks for the benefits of the past year and to pray for good crops, good health, peace, and offspring during the coming year. Client lineages also observe the totemic and other ritual rules of the *Bɔyar*. From time to time reciprocal visits are paid to the client lineages by representatives of the Hill Talis [609] lineages that sponsor them before the *Bɔyar*. These visitors, coming as emissaries of the *Bɔyar*, are received with the hospitality due to honoured kinsmen and travel long distances in hostile country under the safe conduct of their client associates without danger. It is chiefly from its client lineages that pilgrims come to a particular *Bɔyar*.

784 The personal totemic avoidances of wards of a Talis *Bɔyar* are instances
776 of a more general rule. It often happens that a child's spirit-guardian is a
184 matrilateral ancestor or ancestress, its father's maternal grandfather, for instance. Then the ward (*sɛyəraan*) is obliged to observe the totemic avoidances which were held by his spirit-guardian during the latter's lifetime. He must do so, according to native doctrine, because he will have to offer sacrifices throughout his lifetime to his spirit-guardian; and as a sacrifice is an act of communion, both between the living, and between the living and the dead, he would be unable either to offer or to partake of sacrifices to his spirit-guardian if he did not keep the latter's taboos. Thus he would nullify the bond of mystical tutelage and lay himself open to inevitable disasters. He would also gravely damage his relations with the agnatic descendants of his spirit-guardian, upon whom falls the duty of maintaining the cult of the latter's spirit and whom he will sometimes have to join in sacrifice. There are many people among the Namoos who observe Talis taboos for this reason, and many Talis who avoid both the totems of their own clan and those of other clans as well. The fowl taboo of the Namoos is an exception to this rule, for the obvious reason that it is restricted to first-born children. Even if a man had to avoid the fowl in his lifetime, it ceases to be relevant after his death, and is no longer remembered by his descendants. But the rule does apply to the ancillary totems of those Namoo clans and lineages that have any, such as the

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leopard taboo of Dkoog; for these taboos are of the same class as those of the Talis.

An individual's avoidance of his matrilateral spirit-guardian's totems is, of course, an avoidance of the totems of the latter's lineage. They are the people who have the custody of the shrine at which sacrifices must be offered to the *sɛyər* spirit; their mediation is essential for a correct relationship between ward and spirit-guardian. It is with them, the living members of the spirit-guardian's lineage, that the ward shares the communion of sacrifice, and this is the fundamental condition for preserving the mystical goodwill of the *sɛyər*. On the same principle, a person given as ward to a Talis *Bɔyar* would be precluded from sacrificing to the *sɛyər*, that is from sharing in the communion of sacrifice with the members of the *Bɔyar* congregation through whom alone ritual access can be gained to the *Bɔyar*, if he does not observe their totemic avoidances. This is the symbol of the unique religious and moral bond between them. There are other ways, too, in which a matrilateral ancestor can be endowed with direct and permanent ritual efficacy for a man. Such a spirit may become (*naam*) his divining spirit (*bakologo*) or his Destiny (*yin*). Then he will have to call upon this ancestor's agnatic descendants to come and consecrate a shrine to the spirit at his house. He will have to sacrifice to this spirit and share the communion of sacrifice with the spirit's agnatic descendants. Therefore, he, too, must respect the totems of this matrilateral ancestor's lineage.

We see, therefore, that an individual can have private totemic observances not shared by other members of his lineage or clan. Like clan totems, however, they become obligatory on him in virtue of a particular tie of descent. Superficially, they can be understood as emblems of this tie and of the living kinship ties that flow from it. But there is more to it than this, as we see from the totemic bond between stranger wards of an External *Bɔyar* and the *Bɔyar* congregation.

The stranger ward and his parents are not kinsmen of the lineage that sponsors them. But they do acquire a relationship of what might be called quasi-kinship with their sponsors and a ritual bond with the *Bɔyar* which carries social duties and religious obligations equivalent to those of adherents by descent of the *Bɔyar*. These relationships are based on the fact that stranger pilgrims establish a line of descent through the mystical aid of the *Bɔyar*. It is, as the natives put it, 'because it is on his (the *Bɔyar's*) account that we have begotten children'.

Similarly, the association of totemic and other ritual observances with lineage and clanship groupings is seen to have a wider significance when the client lineages of Hill Talis *Bɔya* are brought into the picture. The ties between client lineages and the true member lineages of the *Bɔyar* to which they owe ritual allegiance may be called quasi-clanship, to sum up the native interpretation of the relationship in one word.

Totemic Taboos and the Patrilineal Principle

We have endeavoured to keep the information adduced in the preceding pages down to the minimum necessary for our argument. It is enough, however, to justify the conclusion that the ritual observances we have

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Every functionally differentiated aspect of the social life carries specific norms of conduct. It implies specific social obligations, jural rights, and, very often, economic relationships. It usually has a morphological correlate, as offices are vested in particular lineages, localities are associated with lineages, and social roles are transmitted by descent or determined by kinship. Hence every functionally differentiated aspect of social life tends to be subject to specific ritual sanctions within the general frame of the ancestor cult and to be identified by particular ritual symbols. In terms of the individual's place in the social system, this means that Tale religious ideology recognizes the fact that a man's social personality is compounded of many roles corresponding to the different functional aspects of social life in which he takes part. But this multiplicity of social roles does not obliterate the individual. Though he is a microcosm of his society he is always, also, uniquely himself. At times this is the prime determinant of his behaviour, at others a particular social role or membership of a corporate group is decisive. Totemic and other ritual symbols are the ideological landmarks that keep the individual on his course.

We see this very well in the case of a chief or other politico-ritual functionary. The man himself with his personal qualities, his career, his good or ill fortune is one thing. He also belongs to his lineage, and is subject to the code of lineage rights and duties. His title to his office rests on this. Then he is also a chief, with the special ritual and secular privileges and responsibilities of his office. Each facet of his social personality corresponds to a different functional aspect of social life—the aspect of private relationships, of lineage membership, of politico-ritual office representing common or corporate interests. Each aspect has its ritual imprimatur, made explicit largely in the form of symbolic actions or taboos, especially animal taboos. Chiefs, for instance, may not eat the bush-pig (*dee*) and the dog (*baa*); the natives say that is because they are scavengers and therefore unclean in both the physical and the mystical sense.

The use of ritual symbolism in this context is not fortuitous. It reflects the supremacy of the ancestors as the sanction of the social order. Men cannot visualize their ancestors, but they experience their intervention in human affairs; and this gives a clue to the importance of animal symbolism in Tale religion.

As a member of a corporate group, a man comes under the spiritual jurisdiction of the common ancestors of the group, focused in the lineage *boyar*. This relationship is symbolized, *inter alia*, by his totemic taboos. As a unique individual his immediate ancestors have most relevance for him. The pattern of his life is broadly the same as that of his contemporaries. But particular events such as an illness, or the birth of a child, have a personal significance in his own biography. The Tallensi sum this up in the notion of Personal Destiny (*Yin*). Certain ancestors of his become a man's *Yin*. They are revealed to him gradually in the course of years. The process begins with some stroke of good or, more usually, ill fortune that singles him out. He builds a shrine to his *Yin* ancestors in which are incorporated material symbols of the occasions on which they were revealed to him. And animals play a big part in these

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symbols. It may be a domestic animal peculiarly associated with the man because he reared it. But far more significance is attached to a bush animal killed in the hunt, or an aquatic animal caught in a fish drive. Encountering such an animal is a matter of luck. Overcoming it demands skill and has an element of danger; and this singles out the successful hunter or fisherman from his fellows. It is a sign of the intervention of his *Yin* ancestors in his life and the animal is an obvious choice as a symbol for them. It should be stressed that the question of economic value does not come in at all. Bush and aquatic animals have very little economic value. It is as symbols of personal achievement and luck that they have meaning.

But what is the common psychological theme in these different categories of animal symbolism? The relations between men and their ancestors among the Tallensi are a never-ceasing struggle. Men try to coerce and placate their ancestors by means of sacrifices. But the ancestors are unpredictable. It is their power to injure and their sudden attacks on routine well-being that make men aware of them rather than their beneficent guardianship. It is by aggressive intervention in human affairs that they safeguard the social order. Do what they will, men can never control the ancestors. Like the animals of the bush and the river, they are restless, elusive, ubiquitous, unpredictable, aggressive. The relations of men with animals in the world of common-sense experience are an apt symbolism of the relations of men with their ancestors in the sphere of mystical causation.

It is an interesting point that the commonest and most widely respected totem or quasi-totem animals are what Tallensi call 'teeth-bearers' (*nyindem*)—reptiles and carnivores, whose weapons are their teeth and who live and defend themselves by attacking other animals or even men. The symbolical link with the potential aggressiveness of the ancestors is patent.[1] This is, no doubt, the chief reason why other species of earth-dwelling animals are not selected as Earth taboos.

To sum up, animals are peculiarly apt symbols for the livingness—the immortality—of the ancestors as this emerges in the various functionally differentiated aspects of the social life. They symbolize, in particular, the potential aggressiveness of the ancestors as the supreme sanction of Tale cultural values. They serve to crystallize in simple, concrete, unequivocal imperatives and images the notion of the binding force of the moral code which is not clearly apparent in the diffused and particularized imperatives that make up the day-to-day experience of it. Different animal symbols stand for different aspects of the moral code, but they all form a connected series corresponding to the unitary basis of that code and the all-embracing sanctions of the ancestor cult. The principles of right and wrong, of duty and justice, of what is permissible and what is prohibited in social life fall into a consistent scheme among the Tallensi. And as the existence of the society depends on the maintenance of this code, its ultimate sanctions are necessarily of mystical form.

[1] Teeth are a common symbol of aggression among many peoples. The association is familiar to psychologists. We have it ourselves—witness our expression 'to show one's teeth'.

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or personal mishaps. They do not attempt to control nature by means of ritual, though the content of their prayers might persuade the superficial observer that this is their object. Their ritual is concerned with the effects of natural phenomena and physiological happenings on the fate of the individual and the coherence of the community. Ritual is the means of fortifying the individual and the society against these effects. Tallensi believe that the fate of individuals and of communities depends on their relationships with mystical powers. Natural phenomena are the medium, as it were, by means of which these powers intervene in human affairs. If men offend them, they will intervene disastrously; if men please them, they will intervene beneficently. And men offend or please the mystical powers by the manner in which they behave to one another and by the way in which they observe the moral norms of the society and the ritual duties that symbolize these norms. Ritual—that is, sacrifice and prayer—is a means of keeping up a good relationship with the mystical powers. These, as we know, are principally the ancestors and the Earth.

Striving after Security: the Ritual Background

We have tried to state briefly how the Tallensi connect their ritual conceptions with their striving after personal prosperity and social security. This can be put in another way. The individual farmer, working his own land with the aid of his dependants for their common subsistence, looks to his and their immediate ancestors for spiritual protection. He and his dependants are personally responsible for the success of their efforts in the working of their fields. They are also personally responsible for the goodwill of their immediate ancestors. The sacrifices and prayers they offer to their ancestors at sowing and harvest express these private concerns. They enable them to enjoy the fruits of their labour with a clear conscience and to overcome the demoralizing effect of accidents, which they regard as private misfortunes.

On the other hand, public calamities are associated with the mystical powers of the Earth, which are a symbolical projection of the common concerns of mankind. By prayers and sacrifices the ritual officers who represent the community in relation to the Earth and the Earth in relation to the community, the tendaanas, preserve the benevolence of the Earth towards mankind. Even though ritual measures often and obviously fail to prevent a public calamity, they serve to reintegrate the community after the calamity has passed. The idea of the Earth's being concerned with the common good corresponds to the fact that the cultivations of individuals are but parcels of land cut from the limitless earth.

Just as the earth's surface is limitless, so the mystical power of the Earth is universal.[1] All men everywhere acknowledge this in the ritual observances by which they show their respect for the Earth. The most important of these observances are the rules concerning 'things found on

[1] The word *tey* belongs to the *ka—si* Noun Class and takes the third person singular pronoun *ka*. This is the pronoun always used to refer to the earth in its material aspect. But in its mystical aspect the Earth is commonly referred to by the third person singular pronoun *u* which is primarily used for persons. To conform with this rule, we write 'earth' in the first sense with a lower-case initial letter, and 'Earth' with a capital letter for the latter.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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and watched over by his ancestors. If she or the child dies in childbirth the responsibility falls on her husband. A child should be born under its father's roof, literally into the lineage to which it comes as a profit (*ŋoor*) and a responsibility, and under the auspices of its patrilineal ancestors, the spiritual arbiters of its destiny, to whom it will later in life bring sacrifices. Its life will depend on these ancestors, one of whom will immediately demand to be made its spiritual guardian, charged with preserving its life (*mar u ŋɔvɔr*).

Not only should a child be born under its father's roof, but it should, ideally, be reared, or at least be brought through the first dangerous months of infancy, in its father's house. Circumstances occasionally compel a child to be entrusted to the care of its mother's family, and the Tallensi are practical enough to accept this necessity with equanimity. But they are extremely reluctant to let a young infant pass out of the direct tutelage of its paternal kin and ancestors even for a short while. Thus strong objection is raised if a young wife takes her infant and goes to stay at her parents' house for some time. Here, again, practical necessity may leave no alternative, but there is always a feeling of uneasiness, as can be seen from the following case. When Nindɔyat of Zubiuŋ died, his youngest wife went home to her father's house at Tɔŋ-Seug, about a quarter of a mile from her late husband's house, taking her infant of some six months with her. Nindɔyat's brother and prospective heir tried to prevent her going, but she was not well, and they had to admit that she would be better cared for by her mother than by her co-wives. So they allowed her to go. A couple of weeks later, however, the baby fell ill, and though the young mother was staying only a few minutes' walk from her late husband's house, she returned to it immediately. 'She came running back home', her late husband's brother told me, 'because the child was ill. Its (dead) father had not agreed for it to be taken away (that is, the dead father, now a spirit, had mystically caused the child's illness as a sign of his displeasure). And supposing the child were to die at its maternal uncle's house? Should we not say that they had caused the death of our child?' The proper ritual measures to cure the child, without which practical leechcraft could not avail, could only be taken by its father or his representative in its father's house. The young mother believed this as firmly as her late husband's heir.

For all these reasons it is a taboo (*kihɔr*) for a child to be born in its mother's father's house. His ancestor spirits cannot watch over mother and child, for they do not 'own (*so*)' the child. It is, therefore, dangerous for the child's health and chances of survival. Of course, such a thing may, and sometimes does happen by accident. Then the child's father must, whenever he can afford it, erase the pollution by the ceremony of 'removing the blood (*vaa ziem*)' of the birth from his father-in-law's house. He sends a sheep and beer to his father-in-law as a placation

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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the child falls largely on the other women of the household, though the wives of neighbours belonging to the same expanded family, if they are near, might give some help too.[1] The younger women fetch water and cook for her. One of the experienced old women, her mother-in-law or the wife of a neighbour, usually of one of her husband's fellow members of the same inner lineage, supervises and sees to such matters as the bathing of mother and child and the ritual emergence from seclusion of the mother. When she is getting about again, her mother-in-law or senior co-wives must keep a watch over her to see that she does not over-exert herself or go any distance unaccompanied. For as we have mentioned earlier, a woman after childbirth is nervous and may be driven mad by evil trees and stones if she is alone far from home.

These are some of the things a man thinks of when he says that begetting or bearing a child is hard; but they are only the beginning of a father's tribulations. Talking with men immediately after the birth of a child to them, one feels a secret anxiety behind their obvious joy. Many children die in infancy,[2] the Tallensi say, and how can a man know if this particular child will survive? During the first few months of life a child is extremely vulnerable, both physically and mystically. Medicine to keep out evil trees and stones is carefully daubed over the gateway and over every orifice in the homestead wall, and in a circle round the spot where the child lies. *Nɔya teem* ('mouth medicine'), to protect it against malicious praise is given to it. Lucky omens, whether of a conventional or an unconventional kind, are noted. Then, some days after its birth, the child's father or the head of the joint family visits a diviner to find out which of the lineage ancestors is taking it as a spiritual ward (*sɛŋɔraan*) to guard its life (*gur u yɔvɔr*) and watch over its growth. Only after two to six months from the day of its birth is the child at length allowed out of doors; and then it must be ritually carried out, for the first time, by a clanswoman (*pɔŋayabəlɔg*) of the father's clan (i.e. by a 'female father', *bapɔk*, of the child) chosen by divination, so that the ancestors may bless this important step in its development. And this is not the end of the story, for a father's responsibilities for his children never come to an end, as we shall see presently.

[1] Among the Tallensi, as among many patrilineal peoples, the parturient woman's sisters do not assist at the birth of the child. For, as the natives say, it is not their child. The responsibility of assisting at the birth falls on the wives of the lineage to which the child belongs—women who will later be recognized as its proxy and classificatory mothers. It is one of these women, too, who suckles the child for the first two or three days until the mother's milk begins to flow properly. A parturient woman's mother and sisters bring her gifts of foodstuffs and firewood; and her father also sends her a gift of foodstuffs, guinea-fowls, salt, and other condiments, according to his means. They have nothing to do with the care of mother and child during and after the confinement.

[2] Infant mortality is high—probably about 150–200 per 1,000. Cf. my paper 'A Note on Fertility among the Tallensi of the Gold Coast', *Sociological Review*, vol. xxxv, nos. 3 and 4, 1943.

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had two little daughters, aged about 3, by different wives. One day the two children appeared very proudly each wearing a strip of cotton print about the waist. Omara explained that he had bought them these 'skirts', which had to be exactly the same in size and pattern. Had they been different in colour or size, or had he bought the children different presents, they would have been very upset and their mothers angry. He would have been accused of discriminating between them.

As this instance suggests, the closer children are in age or parentage or both the more should they be treated alike. The limiting case is that of twins and this deserves a special note. Twins (*leeba*)[1] are not greeted with joy among the Tallensi; but they are not destroyed; nor are they regarded as sacred in any circumstances; nor is the mother subject to moral censure or ritual penalties. But no woman desires to bear twins. One of the most efficacious medicines that can be placed in a ground-nut plot or among *ma'ana* (*Hibiscus esculentus*), *bet* (*H. sabdariffa*), or *bɛris* (*H. cannabinus*) plants—all of which supply favourite ingredients for sauces[2]—to prevent women from pilfering these crops is the medicine of twins (*leeba teem*) used in purifying the parents of twins. Anyone who defies this charm will have twins, it is said. I have seen women run on catching sight unexpectedly of a twin medicine charm dangling in a farm.

Tallensi believe that twins may not be 'human (*ninvoo*)'—i.e. complete social beings—at birth. As soon as they are born, a man who owns twin medicine is asked for medicine to mark their sleeping-place. If one or both die shortly after birth that is proof positive that he or they are *kɔlkpaaris*, malicious bush sprites, not human beings. They are then buried ignominiously in a special uninhabited place. A twin that survives the first month or so of life is tacitly assumed to be human and treated as an ordinary child. But if it dies in early infancy it may still prove to have been a *kɔlkpaarɔg*, when the cause of its death is sought by divination. Its death will cause great distress to its parents, for it will have been treated with as much affection and devotion as a normal child, but it will not receive normal burial. Only when it reaches the age of about 4 [i.e. is old enough to have a following sibling (*nyɛɛr*)] and is placed under the spiritual guardianship of an ancestor spirit, is a twin definitely regarded as a complete social being.

Tallensi seem to expect, as a matter of course, that at least one of a pair of twins will die in very early infancy.[3] The survivor then has to be

[1] They are always named *Yin* (Heaven) for the older and *Zuur* (tail) for the younger—*Yin*, 'because he sees the light of day first'; *Zuur* 'because he comes last'.

[2] *Vide* previously cited paper 'Food in the Domestic Economy of the Tallensi', by M. and S. L. Fortes.

[3] I can state with absolute certainty that every effort is made to keep twins alive. But the natives assert that the sheer physical strain of nursing and caring for twins is too much for most women. This is highly probable considering that

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his immediate household, it is willingly told to a *bona fide* enquirer. Nor is it a sacred name to be used, perhaps, only in religious contexts; for, as I have implied, the spirit-guardian name can, and often does serve also as the mundane name. It is, rather, a private name, symbolising a unique relationship of religious dependence and reciprocity between the ward and his ancestors. A person's *seyər* is the ancestor or ancestress (or sometimes group of ancestors) who keeps spiritual watch over the person's life, as the Tallensi put it. The *seyər* is an ancestor mystically located at a particular shrine whose status as an ancestor spirit is quite independent of his relationship with his namesake. Any ancestral shrine can be a *seyər* shrine to one or other descendant of the ancestor commemorated. As the guardian of the ward's life the *seyər* spirit has to receive sacrifices for and from the ward at certain crises, such as childbirth in the case of a woman, or whenever the spirit demands it; and, as follows logically, the *seyər* has to be informed and placated when the ward dies.

This is an oversimplified outline of what the notion of spirit-guardianship means to the Tallensi but it must suffice. What we are here interested in is how a person comes by his *seyəraan* name and what such a name is likely to be. My friend Sayəbazaa summed the matter up. Your *wu'ur-soo*, he said, is just "thought up" — *i tiik i pooni*; but your *seyər* name is a "command from a shrine" — *bayər n-yel* — given through a diviner. In conformity with the strong patriarchal character of Tale social organisation it is the right and duty of the father (or of the patrilineal head of his family such as his father or someone in that position if he is still alive) to name his children. It is he — sometimes following a suggestion from a son or brother — who thinks up the everyday name; and it is he, as head of the house, who consults the diviner to find which of the ancestors demands a child as spiritual ward. This demand may come before the child is born, incidentally to a consultation on other matters; or, if the prospective father is anxious, for instance, as often happens with his wife's first born, it may come out in a consultation held some time before the baby is due, mainly in order to find out which ancestors to appeal to for help for the woman in her condition. With later children it may be left for days or even a week or two after the birth of the child. At all events, it is in this consultation that an ancestor (or ancestress) "declares himself" as the new babe's spirit-guardian. It is, on the face of it, not a voluntary choice by the infant's father but a behest which he cannot reject.

Anyhow, having ascertained his child's *seyər*, the father now returns home and makes a small offering to the shrine at which the ancestor has declared himself to reside in his role of spirit-guardian. The father may offer no more than a libation of flour stirred up in water (*zəm-koom*) or he may offer a chicken as well. He prays that the ancestor may take good care of his new ward so that he may live long and prosper.

The child may henceforth be called by his *seyəraan* name; but if he also has an open name, he will be known by that. In fact he is in a transitional state, as regards his spirit-guardian. It is a tentative relationship, as yet. The Hill Talis[*]) show this by calling every infant, at this stage, SAMPANA, a term used in no other context

*) See *The Dynamics of Clanship* for details.

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and probably best translated as "Baby". Proper guardianship is later fixed by a special ritual of dedicating the child to its spirit-guardian with a larger sacrifice of a sheep or a goat or other animal of that standing, which takes place at the first head-shaving of the child, generally when it is two or three years old. By then the child may have a successor in birth order and he will have proved himself to be under good guardianship by virtue of his survival.

But our concern is with the names themselves. What sort of names are these private ones? Some are immediately obvious to anyone who knows the language and culture of the Tallensi. These are names of particular kinds of ancestor shrines which all men have, or owe homage to, through their family or lineage head. Thus, one of the commonest Tale names is YIN[9]) or some compound of this root. It is the root of the word NAAYIN, literally Chief-God, that is the heavenly god. But more pertinently for the subject of names, it is the name for the shrine and the associated ancestors, powers, and votive objects that together make up the cult focus of what is thought of as the individual's Destiny. The best fortune a Talənə can have is to have many children; and if he is lucky in this respect it is attributed to the benevolence of his YIN. Thus it happens that some of a man's children are almost always claimed as wards by his YIN ancestors; and a census soon shows that there are few families in which one or more children are not called by the name YIN or a compound of this word. Like all Tale names, it can be borne by both males and females, and is, of course, both the *seyərəən* name and the open name.

Since having children is so often interpreted as a sign of the benevolence of a person's YIN, it is not surprising to find that often a number of a man's children are the wards of his YIN. If they are all under the guardianship of the YIN "as such" they may all bear the name YIN but with affixes that help to distinguish one child from another. The following is a list of some of the commonest YIN names. They are taken from a list of names found among the children and grandchildren of one old man.

YIN: YIN-DOOG (lit. male Yin); YIM-PƆK (lit. female Yin); YIM-BIL (lit. little Yin); YIN-ZIE (lit. red Yin — because the child was light skinned); YIN-TEE (lit. Yin's tree — referring to one of the votive objects on the shrine); YIN-TEEBIL (lit. little Yintee).

Similar devices are used with other names that may be repeated among several children and grandchildren of one family; for a man's children may be successively given as wards to other ancestor figures than the YIN. Thus another common name that is both a private name and an open name is BƆYAR and its compounds. Children so named may be the wards of the distant lineage ancestors mystically assembled at the central shrine of the lineage, the *bɔyar*[10]), as it is called. But they are also so named because they are the spiritual wards of one of the Hill Talis "external"

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[9]) Cognate forms, in other dialects, are WUN, WENDE. I have given some account of the YIN concept in my previously mentioned books. YIN is also the name given to the first-born of a pair of twins, "because he is the first to see the heavens above". The second-born is called ZUUR, tail, "because he comes behind the first".

[10]) This is the supreme ancestral shrine of a clan or a lineage. See op. cit. *Dynamics of Clanship* for details.

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bɔyar centres. This happens when a woman is taken to the "external" *bɔyar* because she has no child, in order to supplicate for offspring. When, later, she bears a child, this child is dedicated to the *bɔyar* as a ward. The name shows this. In addition, however, each of the Talis "external" *bɔyar* centres has its own set of names for its wards. These names are used in exactly the same way as the general name BƆYAR. Both this general name and the particular names are modifiable in the same way as YIN is to distinguish several wards of the same shrine in one family or lineage. So we find the names BƆYA-BIL, BƆYA-ZIE, etc.; or to take a particular name, TƆŋ, TAN-DOOG, TƆŋ-PƆK, TAN-ZOO, etc. which are given to children who are wards of the Bunkyiug "external" *bɔyar*.

This procedure is followed for children who come under the spiritual tutelage of any shrine. For example, KOLOGO is the name given to a child who is the ward of a divining (*bakologo*) shrine and TƆBƆGA is the name for a child whose spirit guardian is an ancestor connected with a magical medicine often owned by senior elders; and there are many others. But this mode of naming does not account for all persons who are wards of *yin* or *bɔyar* or other shrines. Thus, in addition to the YINS, there were, among TINTA'ALƆM's children and sons' children, MƆRBU and MƆRBIL, BANTAŋ and BANTAMBILL, and all of these were the wards of the same *yin* shrine as the YINS.

The reason for this is typical. The most important ancestor spirit associated with TINTA'ALƆM's Destiny (*yin*) shrine was that of his own father MƆRBU. While some of the children were the wards of the *yin* "as such", the two MƆRBUS were specifically claimed as wards by their dead grandfather "sitting at" TINTA'ALƆM's *yin* as the Tallensi state it. They were his particular wards, but under his spiritual oversight through the medium of the *yin*. So they were given his name. Thus many people who have names other than YIN are the wards of ancestors associated with *yin* shrines and their names may be both private and open. The interesting point here is that the name thus given is that of an ancestor who received it not as a private name but as a *wu'ur-soo*. The original MƆRBU's *seyɔraan* name was YIDAAN; but when he in turn became an ancestor it was his open name that was commemorated. This is the common practice, and the reason is obvious. Like the equivalent in European languages, the Tale word *wu'uri* means both "appellation" and "repute" or "renown". Now a person's repute is not a private matter. It is the public esteem in which he is held. He is remembered by his descendants — invariably with pride, whatever his true character might have been — by the public name he was known by. So we have the apparent paradox that it is the private name that carries some element of ritual value but when a person achieves the high status of an ancestor spirit he is commemorated in the shrines dedicated to him and in the names given to his descendants by his open — in this context perhaps we might say his profane — — name. Neighbours, friends and acquaintances of TINTA'ALƆM's family, hearing one of the children addressed as MƆRBU, at once recollect who is being commemorated. They would not associate the name YIDAAN with the man who was known to them and their fathers as MƆRBU.

Again, what applies to a Yin holds for other groupings of ancestors linked to specific ritual vehicles. A person whose spirit guardian is a *bɔyar* or a *bakologo* may be claimed by one of the group of ancestors to whom the shrine is dedicated and

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may be given his name; and the same rule applies to all cult groupings of ancestors, for example at *ga'an*, at *tɔbɔga*, at *nɔya-dok* and other shrines. 551 553

What about BANTAŊ and BANTAMBIL? This name literally translated means crocodile. It is one of very many animal names given to people and these again are part of the larger class of names taken from natural objects in general. Other names that fall into this class are NAAHO, cow or bull, BAA, dog, WAAFO, snake. They are very common either in their root forms or in the usual derivative forms. So are names like KURUG, iron, KUGƏR, stone, TEE, tree, and their compounds. There is nothing totemistic about such names. How they arise can best be made clear by an example. When TINTA'ALƏM was a youth he went on a communal fishing expedition and had the good fortune to catch a young crocodile. This is regarded as both a feat of skill and a sign of great good fortune. Not only is it difficult to catch crocodiles on these battues but it often happens that anybody who tries to catch one he has sighted gets bitten, and the consequences may be very serious. Men have lost limbs thus and some have even died as a result of such bites. So when TINTA'ALƏM got home his father at once took him off to consult a diviner. It emerged that the episode with the crocodile was a manifestation of TINTA'ALƏM's *yin*, specifically of his grandfather's wish to be recognised as one of his *yin* ancestors; and in due course, after the necessary rites had been done, the skull of the animal was placed on the *yin* shrine to commemorate and symbolise the event. The spirit of the crocodile caught on this expedition thus becomes one of the votive elements of the *yin*, and if the ancestor associated with the occasion claims a child as a ward it will be given the name BANTAŊ. 776

This is the standard pattern of belief and observance when a votive element is part of an ancestor shrine. Thus, to continue with TINTA'ALƏM's Yin, among its votive objects are a much worn hoe blade and the skull of a cow. The explanation is that TINTA'ALƏM was a hard working farmer. He prospered and was able, by occasional sales of surplus grain, gradually to acquire some livestock. In middle age his *yin* ancestors demanded a cow from him as a thank-offering — symbolically, the first cow he was able to acquire as the fruits of his good fortune. After the sacrifice, the cow's skull was placed on the *yin* shrine. But long before that, when TINTA'ALƏM had saved enough only to buy his first sheep, his *yin* had directed him to dedicate to it his hoe, the implement with which the good farmer gains his living. When his first hoe, the hoe he had bought for himself to cultivate his own land, wore out he placed it on his *yin* shrine in dedication. 551 776 778

What happens in the case of a child of this family whose private name is NAAHO, cow, or KUUR, hoe, or KURUG, iron, is that one (or more) of the ancestors who have manifested themselves as watching over TINTA'ALƏM's Destiny — that is, as his *yin* — on demanding this child as a ward has declared the cow or the hoe have been his special vehicle. Sacrifices offered on behalf of the ward will be given to all the ancestors manifested in the *yin*, but the cow or the hoe blade will be particularly cited. 553 776 778

Similar ideas and beliefs are associated with other ritual vehicles of the ancestors. Thus one KURUG I knew was the spiritual ward of a divining (*bakologo*) shrine. His father had fallen ill shortly after shooting a python and this proved to be the manifestation of a matrilateral ancestor demanding recognition. Both the arrow

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553 776 778 head and the python skull were placed on the shrine that was eventually consecrated to the *bakologo* spirit and my informant's name was a reference to the arrow head. One of *his* sons taken in guardianship by the same shrine was named WAAFO, snake.

[775] This case is interesting from another angle, too. The Tallensi have no belief in reincarnation. There is no special bond between a person and his ancestral namesake. He is not supposed to resemble or expected to emulate his ancestor. His name is a display of pride in ancestry, on the one hand, and a sign of submission to the religious supremacy of the ancestors, on the other. Thus he has no special ritual observances, on account of his name, if he is the ward of a patrilineal ancestor.

[614] But if his *seyor* is a matrilateral ancestor, this person might have belonged to a clan different from his own. In that case he is often obliged to keep the totemic taboos of the clan of this ancestor. Thus in the above case it is not altogether an accident that the slain python turned out to be a manifestation of a matrilateral ancestor whose clan have a taboo against killing and eating this animal. Children taken in spirit-guardianship by this ancestor have therefore to observe the same taboo, whether or not it is followed by other members of their family and clan.

553 776 I do not want to follow further the complex ramifications of this aspect of Tale naming customs. One more detail must suffice. The greatest renown, that is the most respected *wu'uri*, comes from election to an office. A chief (*Na'ab*) or Custodian of the Earth (*Tendaana*) is always addressed and referred to by his title. After his death he is certain to have descendants through his sons, grandsons, and daughters, placed under his spiritual guardianship. They will be named either by the name he took to himself on election to his office, which I shall describe presently, or by his title. NA'AB, NA'ABPƆK, TENDAANA, etc. are common names among descendants of such dignitaries.

And here it is pertinent to add that certain forms of disgrace which are associated with ritual danger result in the suppression of ancestral names. Thus if a man dies of smallpox, or is killed in war, his name is never given to a descendant. He will be remembered in sacrifices if he has descendants but not in their names.

551 553 I want to turn now to the open names. Their variety is extraordinary. A few refer to accidental or conventional circumstances connected with the birth of the bearer and are therefore fairly frequent. ZIBA, knows not father, is the name always given to a posthumous child. SAMANE, the home farm, is a common name. It is given to a child whose mother was overcome by labour pains while engaged on some task on the home farm. SUOR, path, has the same origin. TAMPƆƔAR, the garbage heap, may be the name given to a child born after the onset of labour pains at the ash heap. But it also arises in this way. A woman has had several children all of whom have died soon after birth. This is failure or malevolence on the part of the various ancestors who claimed these children as wards. When her next child is born the father says: "I give this child's life to be watched over by the garbage heap. My ancestors have failed me, for all that my children are good for is to be buried (as babies that die are so buried) in the garbage heap." This is a well tried magical idea, found also elsewhere in West Africa and in many other parts of the world.